**Why over 40s are happy to volunteer: Giving up time for charity work found to boost mental wellbeing as people get older**

* **First time scientists examined if it is beneficial to different age groups**
* **Volunteering provides greater opportunities for beneficial activities**
* **Research shows women tended to volunteer more than men**

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If you want to get the most out of charity work wait until you are at least 40.

Researchers have found that younger people view helping others as a duty and a chore.

But as people get older, volunteering really boosts their mental wellbeing.

Previous research has linked volunteering to psychological health, but this is the first time scientists have examined whether it is beneficial to different age groups.

Experts from Southampton and Birmingham universities questioned people from 5,000 households across the UK.

The results, published in the medical journal BMJ Open, found that those who engaged in volunteering regularly appeared to experience higher levels of mental well-being than those who never volunteered.

But when they broke the results down into different age groups they discovered the association between volunteering and wellbeing only became apparent in middle age.

‘The association between volunteering and mental well-being varies at different points in the life course,’ the researchers wrote.

‘These findings argue for more efforts to involve middle-aged people to older people in volunteering-related activities.

‘Volunteering action might provide those groups with greater opportunities for beneficial activities and social contacts, which in turn may have protective effects on health status.’

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The research was based on the British Household Panel Survey, which every year from 1991 until 2008 before being incorporated into a much larger survey.

Around one in five participants said they had volunteered.

Women tended to volunteer more than men, and while almost a quarter of those aged 60 to 74 said they volunteered, this proportion dropped to 17 per cent among the youngest age group.

The positive link between volunteering and good mental health became apparent at around the age of 40 and continued up to the age of 80 and beyond.

But no benefit was seen before this age.

The authors wrote: ‘One explanation might be that during younger ages, volunteering may be perceived of as yet another obligatory task to fulfil in order to be a good student, parent, worker and so forth, so it does not have beneficial effects on health.’

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3730489/Why-40s-happy-volunteer-Giving-time-charity-work-boost-mental-wellbeing-people-older.html#ixzz4NQinyYsh>   
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